

DRAFT PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN

for WEST LoTHIAN

October 2021

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Presbytery of West Lothian covers the whole of the West Lothian Council area plus Harthill (North Lanarkshire) and Avonbridge (Falkirk). The total population is approaching 200,000, and is continuing to grow, with major housing developments in several areas. This population is dispersed across several villages, a few small to medium sized towns, and one large town. These communities are the context for the mission of the Church of Scotland in this Presbytery. The pre-requisite for this mission is for the Church to have a visible presence in each community.

In 2011 the General Assembly approved a reduction in the numbers of affordable ministries posts to 1000 plus 75 vacancies by 2022. In the intervening period, because of the rate of ministers retiring, and the lack of new ministers being ordained, that figure has never been achieved. Subsequent General Assemblies have recognised that there is a larger number of ministers approaching retiral age, accompanied by a shortfall in candidates coming forward to train, and there has been general agreement that future planning would have to consider a smaller pool.

From these 1000 posts, West Lothian Presbytery were allocated 28.2 posts to build their 2012 Plan, and these posts were allocated to 22 charges (covering 26 congregations), and 6.2 FTE MDS staff. At the time of writing this new Plan (October 2021) there are 9 vacant charges, and 1.2 FTE MDS staff vacancies, making up a centrally paid staff complement of 18 currently in post.

In 2020, the world was hit by the Covid19 Pandemic. In accordance with the 'lockdown' imposed on the nation, the Church of Scotland was forced to close its doors to regular in-person Sunday worship and other activities which made up its Church life. It was recognised that this would influence the overall income of the Church, and its ability to afford the ministries numbers in current Plans. This much was alluded to by the Convener of the Assembly Trustees in June 2020, who issued a warning to Presbyteries that there would be a reduction of ministry posts going forward.

At the General Assembly of 2021, the Assembly Trustees along with the Faith Nurture Forum announced that in the new round of Presbytery Plans the number of ministries posts across the Church would face a reduction of 40% on the 2011/12 figures and proposed that only 600 FTE posts with 60 vacancies would be available by 2025. There would also be a requirement to justify that in the future buildings would require to be appropriate spaces in the right places, and that this too should be addressed in a 'Presbytery Mission Plan', as laid down in Act VIII, 2021 (Presbytery Mission Plan Act).

'The Presbytery Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and shall demonstrate how the Presbytery will ensure that the life of the Church of Scotland is shaped around Mission and adequately reflects the outcomes of Local Church Review and ideas for local mission; sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the Articles Declaratory appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 including its commitment to ecumenical working; make appropriate use of such ministry posts as may be permitted by the General Assembly so that the number of post holders in each Presbytery conforms to the numbers and timescales set by the General Assembly; ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments, are reflected in the Mission Plan'.

In preparing this Mission Plan we have sought to meet the ministries requirements laid down by the General Assembly (see below) and reflect on how the ‘Five Marks of Mission’ can be followed in our Church life. These “Five Marks of Mission” shall mean:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth.

As a pre-requisite for the first three of the “Five Marks of Mission” the visible presence of the Church must be developed in the various communities which comprise the Presbytery of West Lothian. The Mission Plan addresses areas where there are too many buildings but seeks to retain a place of worship in each community.

METHODOLOGY

The General Assembly of 2021 approved the number of centrally funded FTE ministries posts for each Presbytery. In West Lothian that was deemed to be 17 – an exact reduction of 40% from the previous allocation of 28.2.

To reach that number, the Presbytery Planning Committee decided on a formula which was derived from the proportion of parish population over one seventeenth of the total population of the Presbytery (Population figure comes from the 2019 National Records of Scotland population estimates in 2019). This is a raw figure which provided us with a starting point for our discussions. It is a fair starting point as there are no Priority Area parishes, which attract additional weighting, in the Presbytery. Having said that, the anticipated growth in population over the next five years is a huge challenge for the mission of the Church when only 17 FTE ministries posts are permitted.

We decided to use the provisional Mission Districts which have been devised by the Steering Group which is preparing for the new Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian. There may be some adjustments going forward, particularly along the eastern border with the Presbytery of Edinburgh: these adjustments may add to the size of Mission District One but are unlikely to alter the distribution of ministries posts.

We are conscious that Act VIII, 2021 assumes a ‘top-down’ approach to Presbytery Mission Plans, but there has been established in West Lothian a certain amount of ‘bottom-up’ planning in previous years. The Presbytery Planning Committee decided therefore to hold meetings in the aforementioned Mission Districts, giving the share of posts that each District grouping was allocated, and to see how that might influence our own thinking. Several follow-up meetings have also been held within the Mission District Groupings, and these have been helpful in drawing up our Plan.

It should be noted that with only 17 posts to cover the current Presbytery bounds, not every congregation will be allocated what they would want, and we need to be mindful of Section 2.1.1 (iv) of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act which requires us to ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments are considered.

THE PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN

Key: OLM – Ordained Local Minister
 Aux Min – Auxiliary Minister
 MDS – Ministries Development Staff Member
 LPW – Locally-paid Staff member

Parish Population and relevant issues:

Black numbers represent Parish Population as defined in the methodology above.
Purple numbers represent Congregational Roll as published in the 2020-21 Church of Scotland Yearbook.

Blue numbers represent the declared unrestricted incomes for 2019.

Buildings Designation:

A – Essential
 B – To be disposed of

MISSION DISTRICT ONE : 4 FTE POSTS

Congregation	Parish Population and relevant issues	Status at date of Plan	Plan for the Congregation(s) by the end of Plan	Implementation or interim steps required	Structure of FTE staff required	Other (local) Staff	Building Designation
Abercorn lw Pardovan, Kingscavil and Winchburgh	737 63 20,968 4189 238 81,913	Vacant Process sisted	Unrestricted (Unchanged from previous Plan)		1 Parish Minister	1 OLM	A A or B (K'cavil) A (W'Burgh)
Avonbridge lw Torphichen	862 40 13,854 1804 118 35,183	Vacant Process sisted	Team Ministry with Linlithgow	Establish Unions Create Team Ministry Charge with St Ninian's Craigmallen	See Linlithgow St Michael's		B A
Broxburn	7899 322 88,820	Unrestricted	Linkage and Parish Grouping with Strathbrock/Uphall		see Strathbrock		A
Linlithgow St Michaels	7611 1265 375,310	Unrestricted	Team Ministry with St Ninians and Torphichen/Avonbridge	Create Team Ministry Charge	1.5 Parish Ministers	1 Aux Min 2 LPW	A
Linlithgow St Ninian's Craigmallen	5756 364 81,892	Unrestricted	Team Ministry with St Michael's and Torphichen/Avonbridge	Create Team Ministry Charge			A
Strathbrock	5499 263 90,200	Unrestricted	Parish Grouping with Broxburn and Uphall South	Deferred Union with Uphall South	1 Parish Minister 0.5 FTE MDS		A (B - Hall and St Machan's)
Uphall South	4112 174 60,726	Unrestricted	Parish Grouping with Strathbrock and Broxburn	Deferred Union with Strathbrock	See Strathbrock		A

I.1 With only four posts available in this Mission District there is going to have to be a reliance on non-stipendiary posts and lay working. While every effort is being given to staffing where necessary not every charge will get the centrally paid staff it seeks.

I.2 It is anticipated that two parish ministers in this area will retire prior to 2025.

I.3 **Abercorn linked with Pardovan, Kingscavil and Winchburgh:** There is proposed in Winchburgh a major housing development of some 3000 homes. This provides a mission imperative to the local congregation, and this will benefit from having its own parish minister. The charge is also currently served by an OLM. We propose no change.

I.4 It is proposed to create a Team Ministry uniting **Linlithgow St Michael's, St Ninian's Craigmallen, Avonbridge and Torphichen**. There is currently within St Michael's a staff complement of Parish Minister, MDS Parish Assistant, locally paid Parish Worker and an Auxiliary Minister. There is also currently a parish minister in St Ninian's and Avonbridge lw Torphichen is currently vacant.

Avonbridge is a small congregation (membership 40), whose buildings are less than adequate. While we would like to see a church presence in some way in the village, we are aware that to do so in traditional ways may not be sustainable.

1.5 In this grouping we believe that Linlithgow St Michael's has the resources which would permit some additional paid posts, even at a part-time level, and we would expect these could be used in the first instance to provide the extra 0.5 FTE that the congregations believe would be needed to staff the Team Ministry.

1.6 It is proposed to create a Parish Grouping which would involve **Broxburn, Strathbrock and Uphall South**. We envisage a deferred union between Strathbrock and Uphall South, with the present minister of Strathbrock. This will enable buildings rationalisation in the Uphall area, with the disposal of the church at Ecclesmachan as well as the Strathbrock Hall, retention of St Nicholas' church in Uphall as the principal place of worship and the development of the Uphall South buildings to provide a multi-purpose centre for church and community. There would also be a linkage with Broxburn, either before or after the union in Uphall. (This may not be possible if Broxburn, which has the right of unrestricted call, identifies a nominee before 31st December 2021.)

MISSION DISTRICT TWO : 6.5 FTE POSTS

Congregation	Parish Population and relevant issues	Status at date of Plan	Plan for the Congregation(s) by the end of Plan	Implementation or interim steps required	Structure of FTE staff required	Other (local) Staff	Building Designation
Armadale	11945 436 77,881	Unrestricted	Linkage with Blackridge	Establish Linkage	1 Parish Minister 0.5 FTE MDS		A
Bathgate: Boghall	4775 200 105,088	Unrestricted	Parish Grouping with Bathgate High/St John's Union		1 Parish Minister		A
Bathgate: High	6585 423 83,989	Vacant Process sisted	Union with St John's Parish Grouping with Boghall	Establish Union with St John's	1 Parish Minister	1 LPW	A or B
Bathgate: St John's	12,563 317 60,265	Vacant Process sisted	Union with High Church Parish Grouping with Boghall	Establish Union with Bathgate High	See Bathgate High		A or B
Blackburn and Seafield	7314 232 81,957	Unrestricted	Team Ministry Charge	Establish Union with Whitburn Brucefield	1 Parish Minister		A
Blackridge	5482 55 21,994	lw Harthill vacant	Linkage with Armadale	Break Linkage with Harthill St Andrews	see Armadale		A
Harthill St Andrews	3706 166 64,973	lw Blackridge Vacant Process sisted	Team Ministry Charge	Break Linkage with Blackridge Deferred Union with Fauldhouse St Andrews	1 Parish Minister		B (Eastfield) A (FMH)
Breich Valley	7899 103 35,090	Unrestricted	Team Ministry Charge	Deferred Union with Whitburn South	1 Parish Minister		A
Fauldhouse St Andrews	4960 169 46,890	Unrestricted	see Harthill St Andrews	Deferred Union with Harthill St Andrews	see Harthill St Andrews		A
Whitburn: Brucefield	5581 174 93,919	Vacant Process sisted	see Blackburn and Seafield	Union with Blackburn and Seafield	See Blackburn and Seafield		A
Whitburn: South	7780 315 84,860	5 year Reviewable	Team Ministry Charge	Union with Breich Valley	See Breich Valley		A

2.1 For some time it has been locally felt that the existing linkage between **Blackridge** and **Harthill St Andrews** has not worked (north/south across the M8 motorway), and prior to making up this Plan it was thought that it would better serve the mission of the Church for that link to be broken and for a new linkage to be formed west/east; in Blackridge's case with **Armadale**, and Harthill St. Andrews with **Whitburn South**, taking into consideration the Heartlands development. While the

situation with Harthill St Andrews is covered under 2.3 below, we would propose that Blackridge should continue to pursue a linkage with Armadale, using both buildings – Blackridge has been refurbished and provides a multi-use space which is well used.

2.2 In the **Bathgate** area it is envisaged that there be a union of **Bathgate High** and **Bathgate St John's**, with the disposal of one set of buildings. The united congregation would form a parish grouping with **Bathgate Boghall**. The present parish boundaries need adjustment, either by forming one parish which incorporates the three present parishes or an adjustment which makes the parish grouping responsible for the Wester Inch area, which is detached from the main part of Bathgate and Boghall.

2.3 In the area south of the M8, which currently has six congregations, there is a local desire for a Team Ministry of three ministers covering the whole area. In the first instance it is envisaged that there will be a union of **Blackburn and Seafeld** and **Whitburn Brucefield**, a union of **Breich Valley** and **Whitburn South**, and a deferred union of **Fauldhouse St Andrew's** and **Harthill St Andrew's**. There are plans for regeneration of housing in some parts of this area.

2.4 It is anticipated that the minister of Fauldhouse St Andrews will retire prior to 2025.

MISSION DISTRICT THREE : 6.5 FTE POSTS

Congregation	Parish Population and relevant issues)	Status at date of Plan	Plan for the Congregation(s) by the end of Plan	Implementation or interim steps required	Structure of FTE staff required	Other (Local) Staff	Building Designation (draft)
Kirknewton and East Calder	7883 285 110,242	Unrestricted	Unchanged		1 Parish Minister		A or B A
Kirk of Calder	5073 451 90,310	Vacant Process sisted	Parish Grouping with Livingston Old and Livingston United		3 Parish Minister 1.5 FTE MDS	0.5 FTE MDS	A
Livingston Old	15370 280 100,042	Unrestricted	Parish Grouping with Kirk of Calder and Livingston United				A (Village) A (Deans)
Livingston United	39358 234 95,350	Unrestricted	Parish Grouping with Kirk of Calder and Livingston Old				A
Polbeth lw West Kirk of Calder	2529 149 43,965 3566 215 77,661	Unrestricted	Unchanged		1 Parish Minister	1 OLM	A A

1.1 There is extensive housing development planned, or already underway, in East Calder and West Calder, with further housing development taking place in Livingston.

1.2 **Livingston United** is an ecumenical parish which dates back to 1966. It is an ecumenical model which has never been repeated and is no longer favoured by those seeking to promote ecumenism. At present the staffing of 1 parish minister and 2 MDS are all provided from the Church of Scotland. Until 2020 there was also a Methodist minister, but there is no indication of further ministries staff from the Methodist Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church or the United Reformed Church. The parish of almost 40,000 was taken from the parish of Kirk of Calder when it was mostly fields. In 2013 the congregation decided to concentrate worship in one place, rather than continue with six places of worship. The present place of worship is in the north of the parish, not far from one of the Livingston Old places of worship.

1.3 **Livingston Old** serves the west of the town, which is where most of the new housing development is taking place. It uses two places of worship – a fine suite of buildings at Deans and a 18th century church in Livingston Village.

1.4 Along with Livingston Village Kirk, **Kirk of Calder** is the other historic building in the Livingston area. Something old in a new town is very important for people. While Kirk of Calder lost parish to Livingston United, at least half of its members and worshippers come from Livingston. The area covered by Livingston Old, Livingston United and Kirk of Calder is an area where internal parish boundaries have little relevance as far as worshippers are concerned. The Presbytery Mission Plan envisages a Parish Grouping of these three congregations, with either the whole area designated as one parish or retaining three parishes with some of the Livingston United parish transferred to Kirk of Calder. MDS would work across the Parish Grouping.

1.5 No change is envisaged for **Kirknewton and East Calder** or **Polbeth Harwood linked with West Kirk of Calder**, unless these two congregations wish to be part of the Parish Grouping outlined above in 1.4.

ORDAINED LOCAL MINISTRY

The Presbytery currently has in post two Ordained Local Ministers and an Auxiliary Minister; and these are deployed in Abercorn linked with Pardovan, Kingscavil and Winchburgh; Linlithgow St. Michael's; and Polbeth Harwood linked with West Calder. It is understood that Presbytery may re-assign OLMs if there is a greater need in another part of the Presbytery.

CONCLUSION

The Basis and Plan for the union of the Presbyteries of Edinburgh and West Lothian (as approved by the General Assembly of 2021) states that the primary focus of the united Presbytery will be the mission of the Church. By constructing a Plan for ministries and buildings in the West Lothian part of the new Presbytery around the Mission Districts which will be fundamental to the working of the Presbytery, we believe that this is truly a Mission Plan.

